



Life Issues Part 5 of 5: Making a difference in your world – Time to go MAD

Opening up! Connecting with each other: Share your experiences of how you have taken steps towards living God's best life in the past week and, in particular, how you got on with making more time to rest and be with God. Do you feel closer to becoming the person that God always intended you to be?

Listening in Anita Roddick (of Body Shop fame) once said: 'If you think you're too small to make a difference, you've obviously never been in bed with a mosquito'. Increasingly, as a society, we have a very strong focus on volunteering. It makes people feel worthy; it is enjoyable, fun and can make people feel that they are making a difference. CSV, the UK's largest volunteering and training agency can offer a great deal of advice and opportunities via their website, www.csv.org.uk. Serving others is an integral part of the Christian faith. Just before Jesus died, he humbled himself and washed his disciples' feet, saying to them, 'Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.' Not many of us need our feet washing these days, but there are lots of practical ways in which we can look out for each other. It feels natural for Christians to get involved in volunteering, whether it is individually or as a group, whether it is within church life, in the wider community or overseas and it can be a great way to build links with people that otherwise you might not have much contact with.

Discuss your own experiences of volunteering; did/do you feel that you are making a difference? What are the joys and what are the frustrations?

Starting Small: Read the following passages

Luke 13:18-21 - the parables of the mustard seed and the yeast

Luke 9:10-17 - the feeding of the 5000

1 Kings 17:7-16 - the widow and the oil, and **discuss the following:**

What do the stories have in common? What did the people have to do in order to see this happen?

What does this tell us about our contributions?

These stories teach us about obedience. As we consider making offerings, we have no understanding of how Jesus will transform our offering. For example, it appeared to make no sense for the boy to give his food away because surely it could not feed a crowd that size but, in Jesus's hands, anything was and is possible. When we get involved, and when we are obedient, then God will make our contributions count far beyond what we can physically give ourselves, by blessing our efforts with His Spirit. He will take our offerings of service and use them beyond our expectation. How amazing!

Use your gifts for others: Read 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 together and discuss what gifts you perceive in one another. In Luke 9:10-17, we saw that the boy had used his gifts of kindness, generosity and desire to help others when he volunteered to serve Jesus by sharing his food. Spend some time discussing how we can/do help others by using our gifts a) as an individual b) as a group. Share with each other what you have learned about yourself, your attitude to serving and what, if anything, you need to change.

Looking Out: Now and Later *'There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord' 1*

Corinthians 12:5. *Serving does not have to mean going to do something that you do not want to do. Converse with God, He knows you best and is unchanging!* Enter into a time of reflection, prayer and worship.

The aroma of Christ : You will need a large candle and a small tea light for each member, and you may wish to use scented oil. Set up the large candle with small nightlights at its base. Play worship music quietly in the background. Invite members to reflect upon and say what they are doing or are going to do to make a difference in the world, commit those plans to God and ask for his blessing upon them. Members may want to light a nightlight from the candle and set it at its base. You may wish to mark a cross on each person's forehead using the scented oil, pray for them, or use the words of 2 Corinthians 2:15 as a blessing 'You are to God the aroma of Christ in the world.' If your group enjoys singing, sing some appropriate worship songs to close. If not, play some songs to close, and then go out and make a difference where God has placed you!